

HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q I've noticed the latest phones support a new mobile data standard called HSDPA. What is HSDPA, and where can I use it?

A HSDPA is an evolution of the UMTS, or 3G, data standard. The standard theoretically offers mobile download speeds of up to 14.4Mbit/s and upload speeds of up to 384Kbit/s, but the maximum download speed currently available is 3.6Mbit/s, and 1.4Mbit/s is more usual. This is still far quicker than the 384Kbit/s download and 128Kbit/s upload speeds of normal 3G data.

HSDPA will eventually be available wherever there is 3G coverage, but is currently mainly restricted to London. To receive HSDPA data you need an HSDPA-enabled phone, such as HTC's TyTN II (see *Shopper* December 2007) or Nokia's E90 (opposite). HSDPA will get faster over the next couple of years. Vodafone is currently working on upgrading its HSDPA service to support speeds of up to 7.2Mbit/s.

Chris Finnamore

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ARCHOS 405

★★★★★

£119 inc VAT

From www.dabs.com

The 405 is Archos's latest portable media player, and it replaces the company's 404. The 405 is significantly cheaper than the 605 WiFi (See 'Also consider...', below right), but it has 2GB of flash memory instead of a 30GB hard disk and no touch screen.

It feels tough, and is compact and lightweight at under 150g. The menu system is more responsive than the 605's, since flash memory is far faster than a hard disk. Even though it doesn't have a touch screen, it's easier to use than the 404 it replaces. The 404's buttons had different functions depending on what you were doing with the player, but the 405's always do the same thing. We're happy to see that there's now a dedicated volume control.

As 2GB is a rather meagre amount of space, you can add more storage via an SD card slot. The slot supports SDHC cards, which are currently available in capacities up to 16GB. These cost around £100, but should come down in price over the next few months.

There are three ways to put media files on to the 405. You can copy them straight to a memory card, set the player to behave like a hard disk and drop files on to it in Windows Explorer, or set it up as a Windows Media device and synchronise video and audio files with your PC. Even if you just drop files straight on to the player, the 405 automatically scans its memory after you disconnect the player and builds an index of the files.

The 405's audio player is easy to use. It supports ID3 tags, so you can sort music by artist, album, genre or year. The supplied headphones aren't great – they are tinny and distort bass – but you can plug your own into the standard 3.5mm headphone socket.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Reasonable value
- ✗ Minimal storage space

PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 3.5in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2GB storage, SDHC card slot, plays MPEG4 (DivX, XviD), WMV, MPEG1 and MPEG2 with optional plug-in (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, protected WMA, WAV, AAC with optional plug-in, 5 hours' video playback, 16 hours' audio playback, USB2, 100x13x78mm, 146g
PART CODE 105914EU V2
DETAILS www.archos.com



The 405 also works well as a video player. It can play DivX and XviD video files, as well as WMVs. There's no support for MPEG1 or MPEG2 files unless you buy the optional plug-in, which costs € 20 (approximately £14). The plug-in supports .vob files, though, so you can drop files straight on to the player from a non-copy-protected DVD. The 3½in screen is bright and clear but it has a normal, rather than widescreen, aspect ratio. This means films are heavily letterboxed, although in automatic mode the player zooms in so video fills the screen as much as possible.

You can also use the 405 to record television

programmes using the optional DVR Station, which costs £50. It doesn't have a TV tuner, but you can record from a digital TV tuner's composite or S-video output. It's fiddlier to use than a dedicated Freeview recorder box, but it's the easiest way to get TV programmes on to the 405 to watch on the commute to work.

Archos's 405 is easy to use and fairly good value, but storage space is limited. It's easily expandable, though, and will become better value as SDHC cards drop in price.

Chris Finnamore

Also consider...

TOMTOM Go 720

★★★★★

£280 inc VAT

From www.play.com



TomTom's Go 720 is a superb navigator, with a clear screen and accurate voice prompts. Its Map Share feature lets you correct mapping errors yourself. You can upload your corrections to TomTom's servers and download corrections made by other 720 owners to make sure your maps are up to date. It's the best satnav we've seen.



STANDALONE SATNAV 4.3in 480x272 resolution LCD, TomTom Navigator software, TeleAtlas Western European maps, 2GB internal storage, SD card slot, Bluetooth, FM transmitter, 118x24x83mm, 220g
PART CODE 1M00.760 DETAILS www.tomtom.com ✓ Detailed voice prompts; Map Share feature FULL REVIEW Nov 2007

NOKIA E65

★★★★★

£220 SIM-free, from free on

£30-per-month contract

From www.expansys.com (SIM-free), www.three.co.uk, www.o2.co.uk (contract)



Nokia's E65 is a compact and stylish smartphone with a slide-out keypad that has large, easy-to-press buttons. It has an excellent screen and a superb web browser that lets you browse pages in their original format, just as you would on a PC. The phone's integrated wireless networking is simple to set up, and the handset supports fast 3G data connections.

The E65 is the best compact internet smartphone around and is great value on a contract.



SMARTPHONE Tri-band GSM, 3G, GPRS, 240x320 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 52MB internal memory, microSD card slot, USB, Bluetooth, IR, 802.11b/g connectivity PART CODE E65
DETAILS www.nokia.co.uk ✓ Great keypad; easy wireless networking FULL REVIEW Jul 2007

NOKIA E90 Communicator

★★★★

£660 inc VAT SIM-free,
£275 on £35-a-month contract
From www.expansys.com

Nokia's E90 is the latest in its range of Communicator email phones. Like its predecessors, it has a normal numeric keypad and screen on the outside, yet opens up to reveal a larger screen and a full QWERTY keyboard.

The E90 is a brick compared to most mobiles, and is better suited to a briefcase than a pocket. It feels well made, with tough plastic that is pleasant to hold. The phone's hinge feels strong, and it opens and shuts with a solid clunk. The screen can lock halfway or fully open, but the halfway point isn't at a comfortable angle for typing when holding the phone or when it's flat on a desk.

The QWERTY keyboard is superb. The keys are surprisingly large and have some travel, so typing is easier than on any phone we've seen. The keyboard has more keys than most smartphones' QWERTY keyboards, so you can type most special characters using the Shift key and don't have to hunt around for obscure function keys.

The internal screen is also impressive. It has a high 800x352 resolution, so text and graphics are clear. It's also very wide, which makes it ideal for reading documents, while webpages just about fit without any reformatting. The web browser can cope with complicated formatting, large images and extras such as JavaScript drop-down menus. It's much better than the browser supplied with Windows Mobile smartphones. It's easy to get online with WiFi thanks to the E90's wireless networking wizard.



There's both 3G and super-high-speed HSDPA for when you're away from a wireless hot spot.

You can synchronise your email, contacts and calendar with Microsoft Outlook, Lotus Organizer and Lotus Notes using the PC Suite software. The E90's email program supports POP3 and IMAP servers, but unlike HTC's TyTN II, it doesn't automatically download email settings for the most popular email providers. If you want to synchronise with a Microsoft Exchange server and use Push email, the server will need Nokia's Intellisync Wireless Email software installed.

The E90 has an integrated GPS receiver and Nokia Maps installed. If you have a GPS fix, Maps will automatically zoom in to your location. Map data is streamed over the phone's data connection and cached in the phone's storage, so you don't have to download maps that you've recently viewed.

Nokia's E90 Communicator is an immensely powerful smartphone with an excellent keyboard. It's very expensive, though, so if you want a messaging smartphone then HTC's TyTN II or Palm's Treo 500v (What's New, Shopper December 2007) are both better value.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Powerful browser
- ✓ Great keyboard
- ✗ Very expensive

SMARTPHONE Quad-band GSM, 3G 2, 100, GPRS, EDGE, 3G, HSDPA data, 800x352 resolution inner LCD, 240x320 resolution outer LCD, 3.2-megapixel camera, 128MB storage, microSD card slot, USB, Bluetooth, 802.11b/g connectivity, GPS receiver, 6 hours' talktime, 14 days' standby, 57x20x132mm, 210g
PART CODE E90-1
DETAILS www.nokia.co.uk

CHOOSING A... Portable Media Player

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

SCREEN: 320x240 resolution

HARD DISK: 20GB

SUPPORTED VIDEO: MPEG4, MPEG2, WMV

SUPPORTED AUDIO: MP3, WMA, Wav

BATTERY LIFE: Eight hours' music playback, three hours' video playback

Recommended minimum in grey

1 The most important thing to consider when buying a portable media player (PMP) is which file formats it supports. Not all PMPs can play the same file types. If your audio and video files are in a format the PMP can't play, you'll have to go through the hassle of encoding them again.

Ideally, a PMP should be able to play MPEG2, MPEG4 and WMV video files, and MP3, Wav and WMA audio files. Just because a video file appears to be in the right format doesn't mean it will definitely play on the PMP, as it may not support the video's resolution or audio format. Check the PMP's specifications for supported formats and resolutions. If you need to re-encode video files, you can use the free Super program from www.ersoft.net/SUPER.html, or VirtualDub from www.virtualdub.org.

2 An easier way is to buy a player that can synchronise with Windows Media Player. Windows Media Player will take any file your PC can play and automatically convert it to a format that's compatible with your player. Bear in mind that some players support only WMV Simple Profile video, which is low resolution and poor quality.

3 PMPs have varying amounts of disk space. Most have built-in hard disks, but some rely on SD cards. Look for a PMP with at least 20GB of storage space. This will give you enough storage for around 30 high-quality films or 5,000 good-quality MP3 files. Many PMPs can also record video from a composite video source directly to the hard disk, and some let you schedule recordings in advance.

4 Battery life is another important factor to consider when buying a PMP. If you want to watch an entire film without charging the player, you'll need at least three hours of video playback. Bear in mind that some PMPs come with only a USB cable rather than a mains charger, so if you intend to travel with your PMP, it's worth buying a mains charger or mains-to-USB adaptor.

ARCHOS 605 Wi-Fi

★★★★★

£195 inc VAT
From www.expansys.com

The 605 is Archos's top-of-the-range portable media player. It has a high-resolution widescreen LCD, which is perfect for films. Its touch-screen interface is easy to use, and getting media files on to the player is simple. It supports most common video and audio file types, but you have to pay extra for a plug-in to play MPEG1, MPEG2 and AAC files.



PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 4.3in, 800x480 resolution LCD, 30GB hard disk, plays MPEG4 (DivX, XviD), WMV, MPEG1 and MPEG2 with optional plug-in (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, protected WMA, Wav, AAC with optional plug-in, 5½ hours' video playback, 17 hours' audio playback, USB2, 802.11b/g, 122x15x82mm, 150g PART CODE 105847EU-V2 DETAILS www.archos.com ✓ Great screen ✓ MPEG playback costs extra FULL REVIEW Nov 2007

PALM Treo 500v

★★★★★

Free on £30-per-month contract
From www.vodafone.co.uk



Palm's latest handset runs Windows Mobile 6 Standard, and has a heavily customised interface that makes it much easier to use than most Windows Mobile phones. It's a great-looking phone with a full QWERTY keyboard, and you can easily set up its email program to work with most major email providers. It's great for messaging and excellent value with a Vodafone contract.



SMARTPHONE Tri-band GSM, 3G 2, 100, GPRS, 3G data, 320x240 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 150MB storage, microSD card slot, USB, Bluetooth connectivity, 4½ hours' talk time, 10 days' standby, 120g PART CODE 10601E-VFN DETAILS www.palm.com ✓ Looks great; good value FULL REVIEW Dec 2007